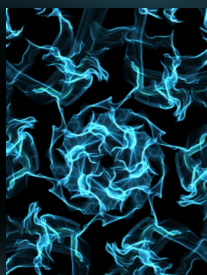




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Unfortunate Soul



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Chapter 1 by Jesse Sanders

"Please no Uncle Les I didn't mean tha-" I'm cut off by a hard hit to my jaw I fall to the ground and he towers over me. "You inconsiderate little shit you think you can talk to me like that!?" He jerks me up off the floor and holds me by my shirt collar. I smell the alcohol on his breath as he breathes in my face. "Les I'm sorry..." I say as the pain shoots up and down my jaw. He releases me and says "Get out of my sight so I don't have to look at ya!" I scramble to my feet and make my way to the back of the trailer. I stumble into the bathroom with my hand pressed against my jaw. I look in the mirror and see the trickling of blood from my nose and lip. My dark brown hair almost blocking my eye sight and the pain I see in my eyes is unbearable.

I pull out a cloth from a drawer in the wooden cabinet in the corner of the bathroom. I soak it in rubbing alcohol and press it against my wounds. Within seconds the burning and stinging rise in my face. When I'm finished I leave the medical supplies out in case Les has had a hankering for another beating. Then I creep down the hall and I hear a loud snoring indicating Les is asleep.

Chapter 2 by Vega Venice



I went to my room quickly picking up a backpack from the floor. Katie would be home soon and then we would leave. I wouldn't tell her where we were going. or why we were going. Just grab

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I had been dropped out of high school since my Aunt Kathrine died from cancer. Since then, we had been living with her shit head of a husband and his abnormal drinking habits. I did my best to get Katie to school everyday. It was just hard. I didn't want people to get suspicious about the bruises Katie was slowly developing. Some were easy to say "She fell" but some where extremely recognizably superstitious. The one Katie was supporting across the back of her neck as of then. Very recognizable. I told Katie to keep her hair down, but every so often she would move and the bruise would become recognizable.

I sat out on the porch waiting until the bus pulled around the corner. Katie ran off the bus to me jumping in my arms. She was 7 years old with long blonde hair and bright blue eyes. I scooped her up into my arms.

"Hey, Katie! How was school?" I asked handing her her new bag.

"Okay, whats this for?" I grabbed her hand and pulled her down the street trying to move as fast as I could.

"I Can't explain it now, But we have to get out of here."

I didn't need to say anything else. Katie hiked her second backpack on her shoulder and followed me eagerly down the road.

Chapter 3 by Darkforest



We walked for several hours before stumbling along a gas station. I nudged Katie in the shoulder.

"You hungry, Squirt?"

"I guess," She replied back.

I opened up my bag to see how much cash we had. Forty dollars. I frowned and shoved the cash back into my bag.

We went inside the gas station and headed straight for the food.

"Pick a snack, but not an expensive one." I said as I looked at Katie.

"I know, Landon." She smiled back at me.

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I grabbed a couple candy bars and a couple waters. Then I made my way over to the cash register.

I set the candy and water on the counter for the cashier.

He grabbed them and scanned their bar codes.

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"That'll be 5.23"

I took the cash out of my bag and handed him a ten. He put the money in the cash register and I held out a hand for my change.

I gathered the candy bars and water off the counter and shoved them in my backpack. I turned around to leave the gas station and there he was.

Les.

I grabbed Katie, picked her up in my arms, and whipped around to the cashier.

"DO YOU HAVE A BACK DOOR?" I yelled frantically.

"Yeah, back there." He pointed back towards a hallway. "Whats wrong with you kid?"

I darted towards the back door as Katie sobbed into my ear.

"It's okay Katie. We are never going back," I said as I slammed into the door, setting us free into the night.

Chapter 4 by -



we wondered for hours looking for a place to crash for the night, somewhere hidden, somewhere safe. Katie, sad and tired, started tripping over her feet so i bent down to carry her. "were will we go now?" she asked in a muffled moan and as i looked down the road, i honestly didn't know, i gave her a little squeeze "were going somewhere safe" i said trying my best to sound strong. It didnt take me long before i to grew tired, I looked around, nothing but trees and bushes as far as the eye could see. So i carried katie into a small patch of grass and it was there, behind a small bush, that we slept our first night away from les.

I awoke to the suns bright rays, katie was curled up in a little ball under the small bush, I nudged her shoulder "Katie, common its time to get up" she let out a little moan and stretched out like a cat before her eyes opened and that bright smile of hers spread across her face.

Back on the road, walking with no real destination in mind, I start to think of all the possible places the two of us could run off to, then it hits me. "Hay katie, you wanna go see grandma?"

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ahead of us" I said a little uneasy "you ready?" I asked her and she looked up, tired from her long walk her eyes still managed to shine bright, she smiled and squeezed my hand "yea" she said and we were off.

Chapter 5 by -



It was a 2 day walk to find the train station, after considering all the facts I thought it'd be best to take a train. After all there cheaper, faster, and they run much faster then any bus thanks to the luxury of not having traffic.

Chapter 6 by David Battersby



Student discounts are a goddamn blessing- and being a student is goddamn easy to fake if you kept your high school ID. I never thought I'd be so grateful for the flimsy, dogeared paper, long out of fashion with the district's schools, which had now moved over to plastic. I boarded the train, occupying an out of the way two-seater with my little sister. Normally, I'd take a four, use the innate teenage skill of intimidation to ensure personal space, but now everything is a risk. The slightest trace of normality risks someone kicking up a fuss, and fusses get runaway kids caught. I'm too far gone to get caught.

For years, we've been okay because I don't get caught. Les would lose the slightest self restraint his liquor-addled brain currently manages to exercise were he to learn about half the things I do. The smoking. The Sunday job. The stolen kisses with David, the beautiful, free, out and proud boy, with whom my interactions were once limited to furtive looks across math class. When I don't get caught, Katie is safe, and I'm not about to risk that for leg room.

Soon, the train is off, belching pollutants into the air and flowing silently along the rails. The gentle bob of the steel sea soon has Katie asleep, angelic curls rubbing against my sweater whenever she snuggles closer. I remind myself to look for a comb at our next stop. I, too, am soon asleep, face pressed against the window and glasses uncomfortably digging into the slight childhood pudge that still veils my cheekbones, and dreaming disturbedly of ways to fuck up, to

get caught, to get killed.

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Chapter 7 by Alice

When we arrive at the sta

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Grandma's

As we step off the train, my stomach lurches with hunger. I almost fall to the ground, but remember that I have to stay strong. Even Katie isn't complaining.

"Landon, I'm hungry."

Nevermind. I hope my weak legs can make it to the nearest gas station to pick up some food. I unsteadily lead Katie to the gas station, tripping over my own feet. I urge Katie to quickly pick something out, while I went to the bathroom.

I ran to the bathroom, and found myself gagging into the sink, nothing coming out. I was so weak that I was shaky, and almost fell to the floor again. I rushed back out, stumbling. I unsteadily handed the cashier the money, and raced out before she could give me my change. I led Katie to the side of the gas station, and we both scarfed down our chips and candy bars.

"Landon, when are we going to be safe?"

"Very soon Katie. We're almost there. I know you can do it." I gave her a kiss on the head, and we both fell asleep in the back alley next to the gas station.

Chapter 8 by Sara_Of_Music



When we awoke, we found our change next to us, but there was also a box of candy bars and a note. It read:

Find safety. I hope this will help. Candy bars are on me.

The woman at the cash register had noticed we were runaways! But instead she helped us. I woke Katie up and put the snacks in my bag for later. Soon we were a good distance from the gas station.

"How close is Grandma's?" Katie looked at me with sad, tired eyes. They were adorable.

"Soon, Katie. Only a small distance left," *Compared to what we have already traveled.* I knew it was a bit of an exaggeration. 7 miles is not a short distance, but we couldn't make it without hope.

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guitar. "Katie, would you like to hear a song?"

"Yeah," the exhaustion clung to her eyes like dying hope. I started tuning my guitar and chose her favorite tune: *1000 Miles* by *Vanessa Carlton*. She sang with me. Katie had a beautiful voice. After a brief break, Katie and I were ready to go.

After 6 more breaks, we completed the last 3 1/2 miles. Grandma's house neared and excitement built between us. That's when I noticed the beat up truck in Grandma's driveway. Uncle Les! No, he can't! I took all of my stuff and hid it behind a bush.

"Katie, I need you to listen to me very carefully," She nodded, I saw the fear in her eyes, "Stay right here until Grandma or I come and get you. Understand?" She nodded again, but the tears were already streaming down her cheeks. **_I will NOT** allow her to go back with him_

I entered the house. Grandma was sitting in her rocking chair, unusually still. I noticed the bruises around her throat. Then it dawned on me. *He killed Grandma*. I rushed out the door before Uncle Les knew I was there, grabbed our stuff and Katie, and ran. I ran until I couldn't run anymore. I had to get away, far away.

"Why can't we go see Grandma?" Katie looked at me innocently. I looked at her, not sure what to say. I couldn't tell her that Grandma was dead.

"She moved," I lied, "The person in there didn't know where she moved to, so we can't find her."

"Where will we go?"

"I don't know, Katie."

the end

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